

**Iran Press Conference Speech**  
**U.S. Sen. Sam Brownback**  
March 12, 2003

Thank you for coming. I'd like to open this press conference with a Persian phrase that the Iranian student protesters often use: **[Iran-A Ahh-Zahd]** which means: Free Iran. We are here today to say the United States stands with you and we will not cut a deal with this terrorist regime that in any way undermines the struggle for a democratic referendum.

Today I join with Senator Wyden in the Senate and Congressman Lantos and Congresswoman Ros-Lehtinen in the House in introducing a resolution expressing the sense of the Senate concerning the continuous repression of freedoms within Iran and of individual human rights abuses, particularly with regard to women. In addition to recognizing the deplorable conditions imposed by the Iranian regime, this resolution also commends the brave Iranian democracy dissidents who have been protesting – at risk of their lives, for a better Iran.

I believe strongly that the brave Iranian people will win this important battle. History is on their side. Tyranny and oppression as forms of government, can not last forever. Once the people commit to change and to a better life for their children – no force in the world can hold them back. America itself is a living example of this principle. It is so inspiring to see the 50 million young people in Iran rising up to demand free press, to demand basic human rights and most of all – to demand the liberty that is their birthright.

In order to appreciate the significance of this democracy movement in Iran and to understand why it is that the Iranian people have rejected the so-called reformers who have not reformed the system in their nearly 7 years in power; we need to remember what the Iranian people are suffering.

My office has been working extensively with the Iranian-American community who have ties with the brave protesters inside Iran. They tell me of the ongoing systematic terror that is inflicted upon civilians every day for the most minor of offenses.

**Iran today** is a place where a 23-year old woman was hung to death because she spoke loudly to her husband. **Iran today**, is a place where despite claiming to follow Allah's law, rape is used as a systematic torture of women by the government. **Iran today**, is a place where even the modest press that was available to the people a few years ago have all been shut down in an attempt to keep the people blind and unorganized. **Iran today**, is a place where a 9-year old girl can be forced to marry.

**What is CRUCIAL to remember – is that this is only Iran, today. Iran tomorrow will be a much different place.** We already see evidence of this in the most recent actions of the Iranian people. Just look at the most recent elections. Iranian voter turnout has hovered around the 50-70% level for years. In 2001, President Khatemi himself was re-elected with 69% voter turnout. But in the recent local elections, a paltry 12% participation occurred in Tehran and less than 1/3 of the population turned out to vote in most of the major cities.

We need to be clear about what this means. This was a boycott of the current system.

The people of Iran gave the reformers a chance – they overwhelmingly voted for and re-elected President Khatemi. For 7 years, the reformers have made no improvement in the system and have not made life any better for the people. As a result, the Iranian people have decided that reform of the system is not the answer. **The answer is a WHOLE NEW SYSTEM.**

This is where it can get confusing for American policymakers – and where it is critical that we not make a mistake. It seems logical to support the reformers in Iran – after all, any reform attempt of this terrorist regime is better than nothing. But in this case, that is not true. If the U.S. government – or policymakers reach out to the reformers – they would essentially be throwing a lifeline to this dying tyranny – and they would be working in collaboration with the current Iranian regime against the people of Iran.

**THIS MUST NOT HAPPEN. I stand here today to express my commitment to ensure that this does not happen.** Instead of talking of reform, America must stand in strong support of the Iranian people's effort to force a referendum – a true change in the nature of this brutal terrorist regime.

The Iranian people have so much going for them. They have a rich history, a fascinating culture and a wealth of educated, determined people. I so look forward to the day when I can meet these brave souls in person – in the new Tehran and see the realized dream of **[Iran-A Ahh-Zahd]**.

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